



Letter of Intent

Applying for Authorization for Creation of a
Tennessee Public Charter School

Opening in the 2025-26 School Year

Tennessee Department of Education | Updated October 2023

Letter of Intent

Application for Authorization of a Tennessee Public Charter School

Updated: October 2023

General Information

Name of Charter School	Teach Right Traditional School, Nashville
Sponsor / Sponsoring Entity	Teach Right USA
Model or Focus of School	Core Knowledge & Traditional Values
Authorizer of Charter School	Metro Nashville Public Schools
Projected Year of School Opening with the Identified Authorizer	2025-2026
Name of School Leader (if known)	

Primary Contact

Provide the name of the person who will serve as the primary contact for the application. The primary contact should serve as the contact for follow-up, interviews, and notices regarding the application.

Name of Primary Contact	Kusuma Buddhiraju
Mailing Address	1201 Main Street
Mailing Address Line 2	Suite 300
City, State, Zip Code	Columbia, South Carolina, 29201
Primary Telephone	+1.803.995.0144
Alternate Telephone	+1.571.355.4766
E-Mail Address	kbuddhiraju@teachrightschoools.org

Application Type

Applicants must indicate the category type of their proposed school application below. Use the descriptions provided in the chart to identify your application type. The category selected by the applicant will be verified by the authorizer in accordance with State Board Rule 0520-14-01-.01. The applicant category selected in the Letter of Intent and verified by the authorizer will determine which addendums must be completed and submitted with the application.

Applicant Category Identification

Please select **ONE** box to indicate the category type for this application:

Category 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	New Start Applicant	Sponsor with no currently operating and/or authorized schools throughout the United States proposing the creation of a new school in Tennessee
Category 2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	New Start Applicant Proposing Multiple Schools	Sponsor with no schools currently and/or previously operating and/or authorized in Tennessee or throughout the United States proposing the creation of two or more schools within the same application cycle.
Category 3	<input type="checkbox"/>	Out of State Sponsor	Sponsor with at least one school currently and/or previously operating outside of Tennessee and no schools currently authorized in Tennessee proposing to create a school in Tennessee.
		Existing Tennessee Sponsor Proposing a New School with Change in Focus / Grade Structure	Sponsor with at least one school currently and/or previously authorized in Tennessee proposing to create a new school with a change in focus and/or grade structure from the existing school
Category 4	<input type="checkbox"/>	Existing Tennessee Sponsor Proposing to Replicate an Existing School	Sponsor with at least one school currently and/or previously operating in Tennessee proposing to start a new school with no material change in focus or grade structure from an existing school.

For each question below, indicate yes or no for the proposed school:

Does the proposed school serve any combination of elementary grades of kindergarten through grade six (k-6)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the proposed school serve any combination of senior high school grades nine through twelve (9-12)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the sponsor proposing a blended learning model?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the sponsor proposing the conversion of a school to a charter school?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the proposed school intend to contract or partner with a charter management organization (CMO)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Enrollment Projections

Year	Projected Grade Levels Served													Total Projected Student Enrollment
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Year One	100	100	100	100	100	100	100							700
Year Two	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100						800
Year Three	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100					900
Year Four	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100					900
Year Five	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100					900
Year Six	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100					900
Year Seven	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100					900
Year Eight	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100					900
Year Nine	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100					900
Year Ten	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100					900

Current Leadership

List all current and identified board members and their intended roles in the table below, adding rows as needed.

Full Name	Address	Current Employer and Role	Focus / Expertise ¹
Cameron Runyan	1201 Main St, Suite 300, Columbia, South Carolina – 29201	Charter Institute at Erskine; Superintendent & Chief Executive Officer	Management/Organizational Strategy; Business & Finance; Public Policy
Vamshi Rudrapati	1201 Main St, Suite 300, Columbia, South Carolina – 29201	Charter Institute at Erskine; Chief of Staff & Chief Operations Officer	Management/Organizational Strategy; Business Finance; Special Education
Kusuma Buddhiraju	1201 Main St, Suite 300, Columbia, South Carolina – 29201	Charter Institute at Erskine; Chief of Data & Strategy	Management/Organizational Experience; Accountability; Analytics Strategy; Marketing
Christy Junkins	1201 Main St, Suite 300, Columbia, South Carolina – 29201	Charter Institute at Erskine; Deputy Superintendent of Institute Initiatives	Management/Organizational Experience; Accountability; Charter School Leadership
Richard Melzer	1201 Main St, Suite 300, Columbia, South Carolina – 29201	Charter Institute at Erskine; Executive Deputy Superintendent of School Improvement	School Leadership; Accountability; School Improvement
Karen Cook	1201 Main St, Suite 300, Columbia, South Carolina – 29201	Charter Institute at Erskine; Executive Director of Federal Programs	Federal Programs; State Education Agency Experience; Grant Writing
Dr. Bill Roach	1201 Main St, Suite 300, Columbia, South Carolina – 29201	Charter Institute at Erskine; Chief of Special Programs	School Leadership; Accountability; School Improvement
Deirdre McCullough	1201 Main St, Suite 300, Columbia, South Carolina – 29201	Teach Right USA; Chief of Programs Outreach	Charter School Founder & School Leader
Dr. Tammy White	1201 Main St, Suite 300, Columbia, South Carolina – 29201	Teach Right USA; Chief of Planning & Innovation	Charter School Leadership; Higher Education; School Transformation
Greg Peralta	2702 Azalea Dr, North Charleston, South Carolina – 29405	Cantey Technologies; Vice President of Business Development	Technology Consulting; Business Development
Zach Wishart	7202 Allison Way, Knoxville, Tennessee-37918	River's Edge Christian Academy, Knoxville	School Leadership; School Choice Advocate; Community Outreach
Ginger Treece	6304 Warlex Rd, Knoxville, TN 37918-4927	Homeschool Education	Homeschooling; School Choice Advocate; Community Service/Outreach

Abstract

Please attach an abstract for the proposed school (two pages maximum), addressing the following elements:

- Mission and vision for the school
- Academic focus and plan
- The need for the school
- The targeted population of students
- Community outreach completed or planned; and
- Individual or organizational history of success / accomplishments in education

The abstract is attached at the end of the application document.

¹ Examples: Community Service/Outreach, Legal Expertise/Attorney, Public Relations, Education, Management/Organizational Experience, Parent/Community Involvement, Finance, Marketing, Fundraising/Grant Writing, Personnel/Human Capital, Other (please elaborate)

Applicant Eligibility

Tennessee law limits who may sponsor a charter school and prescribes what type of entity may operate a charter school². Please read the following statements and check the box to confirm eligibility to submit an application and verify the status of, or plans for, the governing body.



The sponsor of this charter school is not: "a for-profit corporation;" "a nonpublic school, as defined in [Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3001\(c\)\(3\)\(A\)](#), or other private, religious, or church school;" and, the proposed charter school is not cyber-based.

Charter schools must be operated by entities that are exempt from federal taxation under § 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Please check one of the following, as applicable:



The sponsor of this charter school is a not-for-profit organization with 501(c)(3) status.



The sponsor of this charter school is a not-for-profit organization and has applied for 501(c)(3) status.



I will provide evidence of non-profit incorporation and 501(c)(3) status at the time of contracting with the chartering authority

² [Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-13-106](#)

The complete Tennessee Public Charter Schools Act is contained in [Tenn. Code Ann. §§ 49-13-101 through 145](#).

Conflict of Interest

Please identify any potential conflicts of interest that you or any board member may have in the space below. This is in alignment with best practices for both non-profit and charter school governance and is also aligned with Tennessee Charter Law, [Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-13-111\(f\)](#), which states “[w]ith regard to conflicts of interest, the governing body of a public charter school shall be subject to [\[Tenn. Code Ann.\] §§ 12-4-101 and 12-4-102.](#)” These portions of Tennessee law govern public contracts and personal interests of officers and boards of directors.

By my signature below, I affirm that all of the above statements are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.



12/04/2023

Signature of Authorized Representative

Date

Kusuma Buddhiraju

Chief of Data & Strategy

Printed Name of Authorized Representative

Title of Authorized Representative

LOI - Teach Right Traditional School, Nashville 2024

Teach Right Schools is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing school choice options to students from all backgrounds, regardless of their socioeconomic status in Nashville City, Davidson County, and surrounding areas. Founded in 2022 by the leaders of the Charter Institute at Erskine (“the Institute”), the largest charter school authorizer in South Carolina (“SC”) with 27 schools and nearly 26,000 students, Teach Right Schools team is thoroughly equipped with decades of expertise ranging from education, finance, business, and technology sectors. The organization’s mission for Teach Right Traditional School, Nashville is to develop moral character and academic excellence in the current generation of young Americans. Teach Right Schools’ goal is to foster generational transformation through the Core Knowledge curriculum, character education, and extracurricular activities that develop strong leadership and teamwork while upholding moral principles.

Teach Right Traditional School, Nashville’s comprehensive program is founded on three pillars. Pillar One is a commitment to reinforce our A.M.E.R.I.C.A.N Virtues (Accountability, Mindfulness, Excellence, Respect, Integrity, Courage, Action, and Noble-Mindedness). Pillar Two is a commitment to teach respect and understanding for our Western history and institutions. Pillar Three is a relentless pursuit of academic and extracurricular excellence. The combination of these three pillars produces students who are not only academically excellent but who also mature into individuals who contribute to the flourishing of individual families, businesses, and the community writ large.

Teach Right Traditional School, Nashville will serve kindergarten to 8th grade at full capacity and the school academic plan involves the usage of the Core Knowledge Curriculum (“CKC”) for English Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies. The CKC has a content-rich alignment with Tennessee Academic Standards and has proven successful in improving student achievement as it builds a strong foundation in knowledge to develop critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, and a love of learning. The sequential and spiral curriculum teaches the school students to revisit key concepts and skills multiple times throughout their schooling to develop mastery. There is an emphasis on explicit instruction as it is a proven and effective way of teaching all students, including those from low-income backgrounds and learning disabilities. With a focus on subject matter depth and not breadth, the CKC will develop a deeper understanding of the material and also help students retain what they have learned. Teach Right Schools believes the standards-aligned CKC will ensure Teach Right Traditional School, Nashville students shall score in the higher percentiles on the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP). Successful CKC implementation studies include the [Sullivan County Schools](#) in Tennessee that adopted the CKC in 2016 and made gradual improvements that led to their ranking among the [top 10%](#) of school districts in Tennessee for ELA and math proficiency in the Tennessee Department of Education 2022-2023 Report Card.

For the mathematics curriculum, Teach Right Traditional School, Nashville will implement the Eureka Math² Tennessee edition as the primary curriculum resource to meet the rigorous Tennessee standards. The curriculum aims to equip students with a profound grasp of Math and fluency. It strategically arranges the mathematical journey, ensuring a seamless progression from kindergarten to high school. Eureka Math² comprises real-world contexts and modeling to make abstract concepts more tangible and relatable, and the curriculum provides multiple entry points and scaffolds to support students of diverse learning styles and abilities. The comprehensive assessment system provides teachers with valuable insights into student understanding and will help Teach Right Traditional School, Nashville students identify individual areas for growth. In [Bethel School District](#), Washington, students' math proficiency scores increased by 10% within three years of implementing Eureka Math.

The 2023 U.S. News & World Report [Pre K-12 rankings](#) place Tennessee at 34th among the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Additionally, Tennessee's performance on the 2022 NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) results indicate that 4th-grade and 8th-grade reading and math scores have significantly decreased since 2019, while Science scores remained stable through the same period. The state has made academic progress in recent years, however, there is still significant room for student growth and success relative to the national level, and this can be achievable through charter school growth. The Heritage Foundation’s 2023 Education Report Card for [Tennessee](#) also signals the urgency to open and operate charter schools, providing families with alternative, innovative choices. The imperative need for Teach Right Traditional School, Nashville, stems from the reality that out of the 162 Metro Nashville Public Schools, there are twenty-eight charter schools, and the Tennessee Department of Education 2022-2023 Report Card has designated Metro Nashville Public Schools as [“Advancing”](#).

LOI - Teach Right Traditional School, Nashville 2024

Out of the 147 school districts, this puts Metro Nashville Public Schools in the [top 50%](#), making a strong case for school choice options. Based on the 2022 Davidson County [census estimates](#) for the school-age population under 18, the governing body of Teach Right Traditional School, Nashville projects an initial student enrollment of approximately 700 across kindergarten to 6th grade in the inception year.

The governing body of Teach Right Traditional School, Nashville will utilize a multifaceted outreach plan to cultivate enrollment in the school. During the planning year, the governing body will work with its educational partners and local ambassadors to reach potential students and families through local pre-schools, summer camps, community programs, direct mail, email campaigns, in-person and virtual meetings, and advanced social media marketing. A website and social media profiles will maintain a direct network with prospective parents and guardians. The student recruitment and marketing efforts are aimed at ensuring equitable access to educational opportunities for all families and students in Nashville City, Davidson County, and surrounding areas. A website and social media profiles will maintain a direct network with prospective parents and guardians. The marketing team will develop a physical and an electronic brochure that encompasses information pertinent to the school, its mission and vision, curriculum, extracurriculars, and contact information for distribution. We are confident that our well-laid marketing strategy will build awareness, trust, interpersonal relationships, belonging, and confidence in the implementation of the proposed school model.

The governing body of the school has mission-aligned individuals who possess deep experience in varied roles across education and other industries. They are committed to implementing exceptional educational opportunities for Tennessee students and families by applying their expertise, compassion, and servant leadership. Cameron Runyan and Vamshi Rudrapati established the Institute in 2018. Under their leadership, the Institute has grown from the smallest school district in America (June 2018) to one of the largest school districts in South Carolina with nearly 26,000 students in twenty-seven schools serving the entire state. The Institute has a statewide network with students in every zip code and teachers from every county in SC and is proud to authorize some of the highest performing schools in the state including a National Blue Ribbon school. Cameron Runyan is the CEO and Superintendent and has experience in government relations, finance, and education spanning decades. Additionally, Mr. Runyan served a four-year term on the Columbia, SC City Council as Chairman of the Budget Committee. He was also formerly a successful financial professional who served high-net-worth clients across the United States. Vamshi Rudrapati is the Chief of Staff and COO and has over ten years of experience in strategy, and all facets of the charter sector, including federal programs, state programs, charter applications, finance, and special education. Kusuma Buddhiraju is the Chief of Data and Strategy and has over 8 years of experience in analytics, strategy, communications, state accountability, project management, and designing policy-driven impact and evaluation frameworks. Christy Junkins is the Deputy Superintendent and has 20 years of education work experience at multiple leadership levels, including the school superintendent of one of the largest SC K-12 charter schools, and has extensive experience in state accountability, curriculum, and testing. Richard Melzer is the Executive Deputy Superintendent and has over 48 years of education experience at different leadership levels with experience in developing a standards-based report card, creating T3 (a behavior intervention program), curriculum maps, and supporting Professional Learning Communities. He was honored as a Milken National Educator for improving academic achievement. Karen Cook is the Executive Director of Federal Programs and has state education agency experience including the federal oversight and monitoring team and ESSA. Dr. William F. Roach, Jr. is the Chief of Special Projects and has served in numerous leadership positions over his 30-plus years of experience, including as a district superintendent, and founding principal. Deirdre McCullough is the Chief of Programs Outreach and has over 25 years of combined experience as a teacher, curriculum coordinator, and school leader in the traditional, charter, private, and homeschool arenas. Dr. Tammy T. White is the Chief of Planning and Innovation and has over 28 years of educational experience as a public school teacher, coach, principal, and program director of the Master's Degree in Educational Leadership at Winthrop University. Greg Peralta has over 30 years of business development experience and is currently the Vice President at Canteq Tech Consulting. Zach Wishart is a middle school principal in Knoxville, TN, and previously served as a school counselor and an education policy fellow. Ginger Treece is a mother of three who homeschooled her children, a community advocate, and over the last twenty years has helped other families find the right education options for their children. Also, the Education Freedom Scholarship Act from Gov. Bill Lee proves the fervent interest in providing school choice options to the families and we believe our school will fulfill the needs of Tennessee communities.